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ABSTRACT

This curriculum guide is intended to introduce elementary school students to hero tales and legends. The stories are longer and the vocabulary is more difficult than other literature curriculum guides in this series by the Oregon Elementary English Project. The stories discussed are: "Sinbad the Sailor," "William Tell," "Robin Hood," "Paul Bunyan," and "Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp." The authors suggest that the stories be read aloud during the story hour or during some other time devoted to reading. Brief discussions of the stories, suggested teaching activities, questions for class discussion, and numerous illustrations are included. (See related documents CS 200 500-505, and CS 200 507-508.) (DI)

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Literature Curriculum, Levels C - D

# HERO TALES AND LEGENDS

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CS 200 506

Hero Tales and Legends

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The volume entitled Hero Tales and Legends is composed of the following copyrighted selections, which the copyright owners permitted to be included in the experimental version of the curriculum but which may not be issued in a version to be released to the public domain:

Sindbad the Sailor, by Nathaniel Benchley. New York: Random House, 1961.

"The Governor's Cap," from William Tell, by Katherine Scherman. New York: Random House, 1960.

Robin Hood, by Orville Prescott. New York: Random House, 1959.

Paul Bunyan, by Maurice Dolbier. New York: Random House, 1959.

Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp, by Anne Terry White. New York: Random House, 1959.

# HERO TALES AND LEGENDS

The stories collected in this volume are longer, and the vocabulary is more difficult, than in the other collections. We suggest that you use these stories for reading aloud during "story hour," or whatever time during the day you normally devote to reading.

We include brief discussions of the stories, and some suggested activities and questions, but the emphasis should be on enjoyment of the narrative, without the students feeling that they are "studying" these stories.

However, if you believe that it wouldn't stifle enjoyment, you might find it a good idea to have the questions displayed on the blackboard or bulletin board so that the children can refer to them as focal points for review. Similarly, examine the suggested activities before you read, since most of the time the enthusiasm of your youngsters will be higher when you are in the middle of the story rather than after the story is over and they are ready for something new.

Suggested questions to use if you present this material as a unit:

1. Begin a chart at the beginning of the unit and continue to fill it out for each character presented.

| | What was he like? | What did he do? |
|---|---|---|
| Sindbad | | |
| Wm. Tell | | |
| Robin Hood | | |
| Paul Bunyan | | |
| Aladdin | | |

a. How were these characters different?

b. Which one did you like best? Why?

2. There are many creative activities available as a follow-up for the unit.

a. What would have happened if Sindbad had found Aladdin's lamp?

b. What would Robin Hood have done if he had lived in Switzerland and knew William Tell had been put in prison?

c. What would have happened if Paul Bunyan had been a sailor?

Small groups could plan what would happen and then present a play to the rest of the class.

Each student could select one and write or draw what happened.

# SINDBAD THE SAILOR

by Nathaniel Benchley

## TEACHER'S ANALYSIS:

Sindbad the Sailor contains all of the elements of the hero story--bravery against all odds, superhuman strength in the face of difficulty, and a thirst for adventure that wins out over evil, selfishness, and stupidity. In spite of the fact that each adventure leads Sindbad into a hair-raising episode from which he barely escapes, his penchant for adventure drives him from one perilous voyage to another. In the midst of difficulty he vows never to go out again on another voyage if he can manage to get back home safely, but the spirit of adventure is too infused in his blood and he cannot resist the temptation to return to the sea.

Each victory over some dangerous circumstance contributes to his image as a hero. More than once he alone, of all the crew, survives shipwreck. His clever schemes aid him in escaping the valley of the serpents, in combating the man-eating ogre, in outwitting the old man of the sea, and in escaping from the evil bird-people. Each time "luck" favors him and the reader knows he will always come out on top. There is a certain sense of security for the child who goes along with Sindbad on each voyage, knowing that his "hero" will overcome all difficult circumstances and bring both himself and the reader back home safely.

It will probably take five or six sessions, about a half hour each, to complete the story if you read orally. The questions are designed to help the class think profitably about the story. Write them on the board or on a chart so that the children can refer to them as you are reading. A brief discussion of some of the questions as you go along will make the story more meaningful.

## READINESS SUGGESTIONS

1. What does it mean to inherit something? Is it always good?

2. What is something you like to do and you do it over and over again? Suppose each time you did that special thing something terrible happened? Do you think you could resist the temptation to do it again?

3. Locate Baghdad on a world map and discuss its importance as a trading center during the time when men traveled over the eastern hemisphere in search of wealth and fame.

4. Vocabulary: Some words which may not be easily understood within the context:

resolutions
ogre
replenish
Allah

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOLLOWING EACH ADVENTURE

1. What was Sindbad like?: What happened in this story that would help you describe him?

2. Was this an adventure for Sindbad? Why?

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOLLOWING ALL OF HIS ADVENTURES

1. Which adventure do you think was the most dangerous? Why?

2. Why do you think Sindbad couldn't get adventure out of his blood?

3. How would you explain the meaning of "adventure story"?

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES:

1. Draw a picture of the adventure you most enjoyed.

2. Make a model of Sindbad's ship.

3. Write another adventure Sindbad might have had.

4. Think of a strange creature which Sindbad might meet if he were to take yet another voyage. Draw a picture of it. Give it a name and describe it imaginatively.

# WILLIAM TELL

by Katherine Scherman

## TEACHER'S ANALYSIS

Legends are frequently based on some historical event, but in time they become so idealized that it is difficult to separate fact from fiction. Such is the story of William Tell. It is based on a time in Swiss history when the country was suffering many years of oppressive rule under the Hapsburgs.

The story is set in the mountains near the little village of Altdorf, the home of the legendary William Tell, a shepherd-hunter who, through his skill in marksmanship, was able to defend his country against the harsh rule of the Austrian governor, Gessler. Tell is much revered by his countrymen for his courage and wise counsel. He and the men of the village have decided to rout the enemy out of their country. The well-known story of how Tell shot the apple from the head of his son is the high point of the entire legend. It is this part we are including in our lesson here.

## READINESS SUGGESTIONS

1. What do you know about Switzerland? (Encourage discussion of its mountains, scenic beauty, love for freedom.) It will be necessary to read the "Pupil' s Introduction" for an understanding of the event in this lesson.

2. What is a crossbow? If possible find a picture of one. Discuss its difference from the common bow and arrow.

3. Ask: Have you ever had to show courage or bravery in some way? Or do you know someone who has? Tell about it.

## SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

1. Describe William Tell.

2. Why do you think William Tell is considered a hero?

3. Would you say Walter, his son, was also a hero? Explain your answer.

4. What do you think might have happened if William Tell's arrow had shot too high to hit the apple? What if it had struck and killed Walter?

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. Find out about crossbows and how they work.

2. If you could visit the town of Altdorf, Switzerland, today you would see a statue of William Tell and his son in the middle of the city square. See if you can find a picture of this in an encyclopedia.

3. Play a portion of the William Tell Overture.

4. Dramatize the story.

PUPIL'S INTRODUCTION

## WHAT HAS HAPPENED SO FAR

Far away, in the tall mountains of Switzerland, there lived a brave and kind shepherd named William Tell. He took excellent care of his flock, but he was also known throughout the country for his skill as a hunter. At the same time, there was a cruel governor who ruled Switzerland, Governor Gessler. He did not believe that the Swiss people should be allowed to rule their own country. Everyone despised him because, in the first place, he wasn't even born in Switzerland. In the second place, he tried to take away their freedom. He built huge, grim castles on the beautiful mountainsides, castles which contained dungeons. Here he kept Swiss men as prisoners for little things like forgetting to salute him when he rode by on his horse.

One day those who were the bravest of Swiss men decided to get rid of Gessler. They met in a secret mountain meadow named Rootli, and made plans to storm the castle where the governor stayed. William Tell saved the day for them, however. With his skill as a hunter he was able to shoot an arrow straight into the heart of the wicked governor. But that's telling you the end of the story. Just before that a very unusual event took place in the little town of Altdorf, home of William Tell and his son Walter.

# ROBIN HOOD

by Orville Prescott

## TEACHER'S ANALYSIS

Ask any schoolboy: Was Robin Hood a real person? Is there such a place as Sherwood Forest? Did the Sheriff of Nottingham really plot to capture Robin Hood and hang him? He will answer each question with a firm and definite "yes," for Robin Hood is a never-to-be-forgotten hero. Some of your children will have already met this character in one way or another, but the story never grows old. A careful and studied look at him now will bring greater literary satisfaction and a deeper appreciation for one of the classics every child should know.

This story affords an opportunity to study the different types of personalities who represent good vs. bad. Robin Hood soon becomes the favored hero. Even though he is an outlaw, he is the good guy in this story. Sir Guy represents the bad guy and the author gives an excellent portrayal of qualities which characterize his badness. The Sheriff symbolizes "the Establishment" and all of his attempts to capture our hero fail, since no one had ever been "so brave or so gay or so loved by all who knew him as Robin Hood."

## READINESS SUGGESTIONS

1. What do you know about Robin Hood?

2. How do we usually feel about outlaws? Can an outlaw be good? What might make a person want to be an outlaw?

3. What is a quarterstaff? (A pole about six feet long, two to three inches thick, used to ward off blows and hit an opponent.)

## SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

1. Could this story be true? Give a reason for your answer.

2. Even though Robin Hood was an outlaw, he was not considered a "bad" man. Why?

3. Do you have any "outlaws" today who do good?

4. How would you describe Robin Hood? Sir Guy? the Sheriff?

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. There were different kinds of weapons used in this story. Check an encyclopedia and draw a picture of what each looked like (quarter staff, bow and arrow, sword, dagger).

2. Plan a felt-board presentation for another class. You will need to plan your background, the scenes, the characters, and other important details.

3. A puppet show could work well with this story. Have the children plan scenes and write their own script.

# PAUL BUNYAN

by Maurice Dolbier

## TEACHER'S ANALYSIS

No child, or adult for that matter, can resist the imagination and humor that abound in the story of Paul Bunyan. Many writers have tried to convey the emotion and character of Paul Bunyan, and the worn pages of scores of library editions testify to the popularity of this favorite of all tall tales about this truly American literary hero. Dolbier's rendition is especially well suited to this age level. His witty style, lumber-camp jargon, and practical words of wisdom should please most youngsters.

Paul Bunyan will appeal especially to your slow learners, for as capable and strong as Paul was so that he could fell several great trees with one huge swing of his axe, he never did have any luck with the kind of learning "that comes from books." He never learned to read or to spell, and "never heard of numbers." But he is also a hero with whom every child can identify. Most of the time Paul was happy, but when Babe died he was sad. He was friendly, but not afraid of a challenge from Hels Helstrom. He was a hard worker, but he liked to "stretch out over a couple of fields, looking up in a lazy way at the sky." He was both generous and thoughtful, strong and courageous, but above all he was big--bigger than the imaginations of children, and that's the way children like exaggeration to be.

The dénouement of the Paul Bunyan legend is never settled in the story. Suggestions are made, leaving the reader to decide for himself. For the young child, this is as it should be, for by the end of the story his imagination has been so elevated that Paul will live on and on in his mind for the rest of his life.

## READINESS SUGGESTIONS

1. If our children are not familiar with tall tales, discuss the meaning of exaggeration. Using sentence beginnings similar to the following have your class develop wildly exaggerated statements:

He was so tall that. . .
His voice was so loud that. . .
She was so heavy that. . .
He was so strong that even a (bear, lion, elephant, etc.) couldn't. . .

2. Ask your class questions about geologic attractions in your part of the country. . . how they got there, what wild imaginative ideas they can think of to explain such places as a nearby mountain, a lake or river, a swamp or desert area.

3. It would be handy to have a map of the United States near to point out some of the places which came under the influence of Paul Bunyan. He touched points from Maine to the Redwoods.

4. During the reading of the story you may need to explain something about measurement: How high are the fifty-foot tides he stirred up as a babe in the cradle? What is the length of an axe handle?

5. Some of your children may need to know how yeast reacts in order to understand what happened to the Little Chore Boy when he drank a cup of coffee that had yeast in it, or how the sourdough made the Round River rise.

6. Vocabulary: The amount of help needed will depend on how well your children understand the vernacular of the lumberjacks. Most of the vocabulary can be understood from the context of the story.

## SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

1. Make a list of ten or more words that you think best describe Paul Bunyan.

2. What was the most impossible thing you think Paul did?

3. If Paul were living today, do you think he would be a logger? What other kind of job might he have?

4. How could Paul help our country today?

5. What do you think Paul might use a tall fir tree for? (Toothpick, etc.) How could he use clouds? What would rain feel like to Paul? What could he do with lightning? Thunder? Snow?

## SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. Have the children color maps of the U. S. and mark the places mentioned as you read each day. Or have a Paul Bunyan-size map in front of the classroom where particular episodes could be labeled or illustrated.

2. In the chapter "Paul Bunyan's Been There" are discussed some of the places Paul is said to have been. Have your class add to the list, explaining some geologic formation in your vicinity.

3. The fact that Bunyan and his fellow loggers cut down so many trees could spark an interesting discussion in view of today's ecological crisis. Could Paul be the same kind of a logger today?

4. Make up a tall tale about Paul Bunyan. See number 5 under "Suggested Questions."

# ALADDIN AND THE WONDERFUL LAMP

by Anne Terry White

## TEACHER'S ANALYSIS

Aladdin will never die. This story, which has thrilled children for centuries, will continue to bring excitement to youngsters as long as boys and girls believe in magic and might. At the beginning of the story Aladdin displays some of the same characteristics which children have heard their elders accuse them of--good-for-nothing, disobedient, lazy, etc. But when the occasion arises for him to "show his mettle" he comes out the winner every time. Before the story is ended our hero is known for being very clever, exceedingly lucky, and of course very happy. His goodness, courage, and cleverness win out over evil, selfishness, and stupidity.

Some of your children no doubt will have heard or read other versions of this story. This is fine, and for them it will be interesting to compare how this particular story is different from versions they know.

This version uses the flavorful words of the Middle East, giving a certain authenticity to the story. You will want to be sure your students understand the words listed below. If you wish, they could be explained as you reach them in your reading. Some teachers keep a vocabulary chart and list new words there as they are learned during shared reading times. However, too much emphasis on new words during the reading of the story can become burdensome, and so a brief explanation in order for the children to make sense of the context is all that is necessary.

## VOCABULARY

Moorman - a member of the Moslem religion who came from Africa

Jinni - genie

Wazirs, Chieftans, Emirs, and Grandees - high officials

audience - an interview with a person of high position

levee - a court assembly held for discussion of people's problems

Mamelukes - slaves

READINESS SUGGESTIONS

1. Let's pretend you could wish for anything and it could come true. What would your wish be?

2. Can you think of any stories where someone got his wish in some magical way?

3. What is a Jinni? Are Jinnis real?

4. What do you know about Aladdin?

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

1. What sort of a boy was Aladdin--

   a. in the beginning of the story?

   b. at the end?

2. Aladdin needed to call the Jinni many times. What wishes did he make?

   Note to teacher: It might be a good idea to divide your class into groups of four or five and allow them to list the wishes together. Bring the class back together and list the wishes on the board. Then have the children arrange the wishes in sequence. Following is a list of his wishes, for your convenience:

   a. to be removed from the underground cavern (this to the Jinni of the ring)
   b. to have something to eat
   c. to bring the Sultan's daughter to his house and have her returned in the morning
   d. to get the platters of jewels, the procession of handmaids and slaves for the Sultan
   e. to get him ready for the marriage to the Sultan's daughter
   f. to build the pavilion and provide a carpet for it
   g. to finish the one window in the pavilion
   h. to return the pavilion and his wife (Ring Jinni)
   i. to be taken to Africa where the magician had asked the Lamp Jinni to place Aladdin's pavilion (Ring Jinni)
   j. to be returned to the Sultan's palace in China

If the children do not remember all of them, it is not important. The main purpose of this question is to help the children remember the story line.

3. Suppose the Jinni had not been able to take Aladdin to Africa where the Magician had removed the pavilion. What might have happened?

4. Not every wish that Aladdin made could be granted. Which wish did the Jinni of the Ring refuse and why?

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. Draw a picture of the Jinni of the Ring or the Jinni of the Lamp.

2. Write a story: a) (Jimmy) and the Wonderful Pencil
(Your name)

b) My Biggest Wish and How I Got It

c) How I Met Aladdin's Jinni